

**Sermon for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent**  
**Mark 8:31-38**  
**Trinity Church**

The Mississippi River rises about 25 miles north of where we are sitting. Most of us have visited the place. The river begins as a little brook that winds its way north and east through Lake Bemidji. It wanders around in central Minnesota and by the time we cross it at Little Falls it has become a serious river. At St. Paul it is joined by the Minnesota River and the St. Croix. Tugboats and barges carry commerce from there for another two thousand miles. Farther south, the Missouri and Ohio Rivers add their immense flow and the Mississippi moves its irresistible current onward to the sea.

That image has always seemed to me a metaphor for life itself -- twisting and turnings, some backwaters, rough rapids and long placid stretches. But there is always in it an inevitability. All rivers must sometime empty into the sea.

It was that inevitability that Jesus saw and he embraced it. For himself he saw the absolute necessity of his own suffering as the fulfillment of his purpose and commitment; and he insisted that sharing that destiny was the condition of their discipleship. He embraced it when his followers were in denial, trying to convince Jesus, trying to convince themselves, that there was another way out.